

Message Text

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EXDIS TO SECRETARY FROM SHLAUDEMAN THRU THEACTINGSECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PE, CH, BL

SUBJECT: BRIEFING MEMORANDUM: WAR FEARS IN THE ANDES -
EXAGGERATED BUT STILL A PROBLEM

1. SUMMARY. INCREASED TENSIONS BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE
OVER BOLIVIAN ACCESS TO THE SEA HAVE ENGENDERED WAR FEARS
IN BOLIVIA AND ECUADOR, FOLLOWED BY TROOP MOVEMENTS IN
ECUADOR AND PERU. PERU AND CHILE HOWEVER ARE STILL TALKING
AND OUR PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE - SHARED BY THE VENEZUELANS,
COLOMBIANS AND BRAZILIANS - IS THAT PERU IS NOT NOW ABOUT
TO EMBARK ON A MILITARY ACTION. BUT THE CONTINUING PERU-
VIAN MILITARY BUILD-UP CAN LEAD TO MISPERCEPTIONS AND A
FURTHER HEIGHTENING OF TENSION. THE WORST CASE - OF A
PERUVIAN INVASION OF CHILE, BRINGING IN THE USSR WITH THE
US SIDING WITH CHILE - WOULD BE BADLY DAMAGING TO US
INTERESTS. FOLLOWING FURTHER CONSULTATIONS WITH COUNTRIES

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OF THE REGION, WE WILL PRESENT OPTIONS FOR POSSIBLE
BILATERAL AND OR MULTILATERAL APPROACHES.

2. TENSIONS RISE: WITH THE FIRST REJECTION BY CHILE OF
PERU'S COUNTERPROPOSAL FOR BOLIVIAN ACCESS TO THE SEA,
TENSIONS BETWEEN THE THREE COUNTRIES HAVE RECENTLY IN-

CREASED. THE BOLIVIANS ARE CONCERNED THAT THESE TENSIONS MIGHT LEAD TO A PERU-CHILE CONFLICT IN WHICH BOLIVIA SEES

ITSELF AS THE ULTIMATE VICTIM.

THE VIRUS OF SUSPICION HAS ALSO INFECTED ECUADOR, WHICH TRANSFERRED A DIVISION SOUTH TO THE PERUVIAN BORDER. THE GOP THEN COUNTERED WITH TROOP MOVEMENTS OF ITS OWN. SOME ECUADOREANS ARE NOW TRULY CONCERNED THAT PERU, REALIZING THAT IT PROBABLY CANNOT REGAIN ITS LOST DESERT PROVINCE FROM CHILE, WILL LOOK NORTHWARD TO ECUADOREAN OIL FIELDS TO CONQUER.

PERU AND CHILE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO EASE TENSIONS. THE GOP HAS PROPOSED SECRET TALKS ON THE MARITIME CORRIDOR PROPOSAL

AND THE GOC HAS NOT TOTALLY REFUSED. THE PERUVIAN NAVY MINISTER VISITED SANTIAGO DECEMBER 19-21 TO STRESS GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. AND PERUVIAN PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ INDICATED HIS COUNTRY'S PEACEFUL INTENTIONS DURING HIS VISIT TO VENEZUELA DECEMBER 10-13 AND SINCE THEN. BOLIVIA MAY ALSO SEEK TO RAISE DISCUSSION OF THE CORRIDOR QUESTION TO A TRILATERAL PLANE.

3. PERUVIAN ARMS BUILD-UP: AT THE BASE OF REGIONAL WAR FEARS IS THE CONTINUING PERUVIAN MILITARY BUILD-UP. THE GOP HAS NOT YET CONFIRMED ACQUISITION OF THE ADVANCED SOVIET SU-22 FIGHTER BOMBER, BUT DELIVERY OF THE AIRCRAFT IS EXPECTED IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1977. PERU MAY ALSO BE ACQUIRING OTHER ARMAMENTS FROM THE USSR AND OTHER SOURCES.

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4. WAR NOT FORESEEN NOW: OUR INITIAL ESTIMATE IS THAT PERU DOES NOT NOW INTEND MILITARY ACTION AGAINST ANY OF ITS NEIGHBORS. VENEZUELAN, COLOMBIAN AND BRAZILIAN OBSERVERS AGREE. SOME MIDDLE-GRADE PERUVIAN ARMY OFFICERS MAY FEEL THAT WITH PERU'S ESTABLISHED MILITARY SUPERIORITY AND CHILE'S CONTINUING DISREPUTE IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD, NOW MIGHT BE THE TIME TO REINITIATE THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC AND SEEK TO REGAIN PERU IRREDENTA. BUT THIS MAKES LITTLE SENSE TO PERUVIAN MILITARY LEADERSHIP. THE NEW ARMAMENT IS NOT YET IN PLACE. RESORT TO MILITARY ACTION WOULD RUN COUNTER TO THE MORALES BERMUDEZ REGIME'S PLAN TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. PERU'S INTERNAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE SEVERE AND WOULD BE COMPOUNDED BY RESORT TO WAR. THE FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF A PERUVIAN ATTACK ARE POTENTIALLY DEVASTATING. EVEN ASSUMING INITIAL MILITARY SUCCESS AGAINST CHILE, THE LONGER RANGE IMPLICATIONS OF A PERUVIAN ATTACK SHOULD FAR OUT-

WEIGH MOTIVATIONS OF IRREDENTIST VINDICATION.

ON THE OTHER HAND, CRAZIES EXIST STILL IN THE PERUVIAN MILITARY. AND IF THE PERUVIAN ARMS BUILD-UP CONTINUES

FURTHER MISPERCEPTIONS MAY OCCUR ON THE PART OF CHRONICALLY SUSPICIOUS NEIGHBORS, TENSIONS COULD HEIGHTEN, AND AN INADVERTENT SPARK COULD BE STRUCK TO IGNITE LOCAL CONFLICT ALONG THE PERU-CHILE BORDER.

5. US INTERESTS: THE WORST CASE WOULD BE A PERUVIAN INVASION OF A CHILE STILL REGARDED AS THE WORLD'S PARIAH. THIS WOULD :

-- PROVIDE THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS AN OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE THEIR INFLUENCE IN LIMA;

-- BE SUPPORTED BY MUCH OF THE "NON-ALIGNED" WORLD, AT SECRET

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LEAST IN SPIRIT;

-- PLACE US IN THE POSITION OF PRESUMED SUPPORTER OF CHILE - THE VICTIM;

-- PANIC BOLIVIA AND ECUADOR AND BRING ABOUT GENERAL SOUTHERN CONE BACKING OF CHILE. THE OAS WOULD PROBABLY NOT RESPOND WITH TOTAL UNANIMITY TO FREEZE THE HOSTILITIES AS IT DID IN THE SOCCER WAR;

-- UNDO THE LAST REMAINING VESTIGE OF THE DREAM OF LATIN AMERICAN INTEGRATION - THE ANDEAN PACT;

-- PROBABLY REVERSE THE PRESENT TREND OF THE PERUVIAN REVOLUTION TOWARD THE CENTER; AND

-- SERIOUSLY DAMAGE THE CHANCES FOR PERU'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY WITH CONSEQUENT DETRIMENT TO US COMMERCIAL, INVESTMENT AND BANKING INTERESTS.

6. THE MORE LIKELY SCENARIO IS OF COURSE NOT WAR, BUT THE CONTINUED RISE AND FALL OF TENSIONS FUELED BY PERU'S ARMS BUILD-UP, CHILE'S WEAKNESS, AND THE PERENNIAL INSECURITY OF BOLIVIA AND ECUADOR. IN THIS CASE WE WILL NEED TO ADDRESS THE LONGER-RANGE POLICY ISSUES, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ARMS TRANSFERS, AND WORK FOR GREATER CONGRESSIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION. WE WILL ALSO WANT TO SEE WHICH OF THE OTHER REGIONAL POWERS CAN MOST EFFECTIVELY BE UP FRONT.

ROBINSON

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